

“MAKING LIGHT INTRODUCTIONS”

John 1:1-14 January 4, 2026

One of the interesting college courses that I selected was about the **Physics of Light**. Throughout the semester we studied the properties and characteristics of light. In one of the experiments the professor turned off the lights in the windowless room. Then he opened a small aperture on the wall that faced the street. The light came through the hole in the wall and projected the images of the street on the opposite wall, only they were upside down. You see, light travels in straight lines, so rays from the top of an object pass through a small aperture at an angle, hitting the bottom of the opening, while rays from the bottom hit the top, causing the image to flip vertically and horizontally. Your brain then corrects this upside-down image, which is why you see things right-side up.

Truthfully, I don't remember a whole lot from that class, but one lesson was this: **we were created to see and enjoy light**. Why else are we drawn to the lights of the world? What is it about lighting advent candles, watching fireworks, sitting around the campfire, stargazing and seeing Christmas lights that touch our hearts so? How can we come away from a **magnificent sunrise** or a sunset and not be awed by the experience?

The simple fact is that we were made to see and experience light. Our brains and skin are stimulated by light. Light helps us remember, sets our sleep patterns, keeps us safe, comforts us, helps us navigate, produces vitamin D, colors our world, grows the plants we eat, and we even communicate with light through optic fibers. Although we often take it for granted, light is a powerful, creative force in the world. The **Gospel of John would most certainly agree**.

John must have been fascinated by the idea of light because he mentions it no less than 23 times and 7 of those occasions are found within the first 9 verses of chapter one. John boldly claims that Jesus is the Light of the World, he is the source of light. What does that mean for us? Well, for one thing, it is the means of creative power.

I. JESUS'S LIGHT GIVES CREATIVE POWER

Speaking of powerful lights, **our Sun** is a nuclear powerhouse that can burn over seven million tons of natural gas every second. Deep in the sun's core, nuclear fusion reactions convert hydrogen to helium, which in turn generates energy. Particles of light called photons carry this energy through the sun's spherical shell, called the **radiative zone**, to the top layer of the solar interior, the **convection zone**. There, boiling motions of gases (like in a lava lamp) transfer the energy to the surface. This journey takes more than a million years. That means we are receiving heat and light which began a million years ago.

The temperature on the Sun's surface is about 10,000° Fahrenheit. But that is nothing compared to the core middle of the Sun which is about 27 million° Fahrenheit. Even after their 93-million-mile journey, when the sun's rays hit our atmosphere, they give off approximately 1000 watts of energy per square meter. If we could harness just 70% of that solar power we could run the world on basically free energy. In the sun we meet the real light power.

This light power is the idea John has about Jesus. John starts his gospel with, **“In the beginning,”** the very same words in the first verse of Genesis, which launches the whole story of Creation. The force behind the first creation is God's word. John writes, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word**

was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through him and without him not one thing came into being.”

John doesn't begin his gospel with a vulnerable baby born in a stable and laying in a manger. No, he begins with **Jesus as the Word**, the active creative force of God which brought the universe into being. Jesus is the will, reason, wisdom and creative power of God that gives the world its existence and purpose. Just as God acted in the beginning of creation, God is acting in Jesus Christ to make a new beginning, a new kind of life for his much-loved, but often dwelling in darkness creation. John writes, **“What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.”** Not only is Jesus the source of light, but he is also the source of life.

In 2002, one of the popular Christian books was **Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren**. One of the reasons for its success is that it hit a nerve. We have this deep desire to have purpose for living. We want our lives to be meaningful, fulfilling and significant. We don't want to end our days with only regret and misery. We need something to live for.

Rick Warren did not write another self-help book. He states to discover a meaningful life we have to look beyond ourselves. **“God is not just the starting point of your life; he is the source of it. To discover your purpose in life you must turn to God's Word, not the world's wisdom. You must build your life on eternal truth's not pop psychology, success motivation or inspirational stories.”** **We need a light from above that is able to shine through us and leads us to something greater than ourselves.** We need Jesus. We are called to walk in the light. Of course, that is easier said than done.

II. WALK IN THE LIGHT

Tangled – is the animated **Disney version** of the old story **Rapunzel**, the girl in the tower with extremely long hair issues. In Tangled, Rapunzel was stolen as a baby and raised by her kidnapper in an isolated tall tower which she is not allowed to leave. But Rapunzel is an observant and inquisitive young woman. She notices that every year on her birthday some special lights appear in the sky and that they don't have set patterns like the moon or stars. She keeps wondering what the lights are and where they come from. Rapunzel longs to go to the source of the light but to do so she must dare to leave her dark tower, something her false mother doesn't want Rapunzel to do. She uses fear and guilt to manipulate Rapunzel and keep her in the tower and in darkness.

We may not be stolen babies, but I can't help but wonder how many of us are living in fear and plagued by guilt. How many of us have bought into the lies of our culture about what is important, what we deserve and need, and what success looks like, so much so that we are trapped in darkness. We might not even realize it. We just know something is missing. There is more to life than we have been led to believe.

To break free, Rapunzel must overcome her fear and guilt, she must choose the light, and take a leap of faith. On her own she can't do it. She needs help from someone greater than herself.

John wrote, “**And the word became flesh and lived (tabernacled - tented) among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.**” Because we could not come to the light and life, it came to us. This amazing creative Word power became one of us so we could know him, follow him, and see the light in living color. Jesus gives us

power to become the children of God that we were meant to be. He is creating new situations as people respond to him that brings hope, healing and abundant life. Through this word, Jesus, able to transform us by bringing us into his light.

III. BEAR WITNESS TO THE LIGHT

Besides walking in the light, the second way we respond to Jesus is to bear witness to him. The Gospel of John does not emphasize the prophet John's work of baptism as much as his work of testifying. **"There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light."** The activity of John the Baptist is placed in relationship to the movement of Jesus. This scripture moves from the deep recesses of the godhead to the life of the apocalyptic prophet John. He is in a subordinate role to Jesus, but it is still an important role. John is a man in space and time witnessing to the heavenly light and word who likewise becomes a man in time. He helps to establish Jesus as history, not a philosophical idea. This person who is beyond time, broke into time itself and dwelt among us, that we might believe, trust in, and bear witness to what he has done in us.

Andrei Bitov, a Russian novelist, grew up under an atheistic Communist regime. But God got his attention one dreary day. He recalls, "In my 27th year, while riding the metro in Leningrad, now St. Petersburg, I was overcome with a despair so great that life seemed to stop at once, preempting the future entirely, let alone any meaning. Suddenly, all by itself, a phrase appeared: *Without God life makes no sense*. Repeating it in astonishment, I rode the phrase up like a moving staircase, got out of the metro and walked into God's light."

What Andrei discovered about the light of God John proclaimed 2,000 years ago. **“What has come into being in him was life and the life was the light of all people.”** What a strange and powerful phrase, Jesus is the bringer of life and that life is a light to all people. Life is the opposite of destruction, condemnation and death. The light of Jesus illuminates the way to living on purpose, not mere existence but a life worth living.

On the first Sunday, in the beginning of a new year, what a perfect time to come to the light of life. As the children of God’s grace, let us come to this table, encounter the living Word, be made whole, and walk in the light now and always. Amen.

First Presbyterian Church in Hawley

Sunday, January 4, 2026

Second Scripture Lesson

John 1:1-14

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being

4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John.

7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.

8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him.

11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.

12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,

13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be To God.